

Socioeconomic and Cultural Context of the Northwest Sands

The socioeconomic and cultural context of a region must be considered in any planning process. While this plan focuses on the resource and recreation management of the properties, underlying socioeconomic and cultural contexts are important in understanding the needs of the public when planning the properties of the Northwest Sands. Due to the method by which economic and cultural data is collected and made available, the context given here is for the counties intersected by the Superior Coastal Plain, rather than the landscape itself. The data for those counties, Douglas, Bayfield, Burnett, and Washburn is derived from two sources: the United States Census Bureau and "The Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin."

Socioeconomic Context

Population, Income, and Housing

As of 2010, the total population of Northwest Sands counties was 90,010 people at a density of approximately 20 people per square mile. This makes up 1.6% of the state's population and is lower than the average population density statewide; which is 105 persons per square mile. The two urban centers of the region are the City of Superior (2016 population of 26,676) in Douglas County and the City of Spooner (2016 population of 2,624) in Washburn County. As of 2010, the population of Northwest Sands counties was slightly older than the rest of Wisconsin.

At 14.6 housing units per square mile, the housing density of the Northwest Sands is low compared to the state average of 48.5. Seasonal homes, however, are quite prevalent. These homes comprise 28.6% of the total housing stock in the Northwest Sands counties, compared to a 6.3% average statewide. Douglas County has the lowest proportion of seasonal homes with 8.8%; the other Northwest Sands counties are above 35%. Per capita income is \$26,208 (WDNR, 2015).

Economic Sectors

Government, tourism, health care, and retail are the largest sectors of employment within Northwest Sands counties. High levels of service jobs, with a high proportion of part-time and seasonal jobs are present in the Northwest Sands counties. Transportation and warehousing provide more jobs in these counties than the sector does in the state as a whole. Other sectors this can be said for include: utilities, government, tourism-related, agriculture, fishing and hunting, retail trade, construction, and forest products and processing.

Land Use and Ownership

Ownership of land in the Northwest Sands is nearly evenly split between public and private, with 48.6% of lands being publicly owned. 76% of the land in the Northwest Sands is forested. Of the timberland present on the landscape, 52% is owned privately, 33% by state and local governments, and 15% by the federal government. For perspective, the portions of the Brule and Governor Knowles State Forests that fall within the Northwest Sands total 36,900 acres.

Cultural Context

The middle to late-Woodland period is the first evident habitation of the region. The Clam River peoples occupied northwestern Wisconsin and were primarily hunter-gatherers that relied on wild rice as an important part of their diet. The Northwest Sands properties are within the ceded territory of the Ojibwe Tribes. Native American tribes are



independent, sovereign nations, as they were prior to the arrival of Europeans in North America. The Ojibwe Tribes ceded some lands in the northern one-third of Wisconsin to the United States Government in the Treaties of 1837 and 1842. In those treaties, they reserved their rights to hunt, trap, fish and gather within various publicly-owned lands. Treaty rights are currently being exercised and implemented.

Post-Euro-American settlement, the Superior Coastal Plain has played a large role in timber production and more limited roles in agriculture compared to the rest of the state. The mining booms drew early European settlers to Wisconsin did not take place in the Northwest Sands. Today, the Northwest Sands is largely rural, with only Douglas County being classified as metropolitan.

